

Comments on status and distribution of birds in western Uganda

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While surveying a sample of forests in western and southwestern Uganda in February and March 1990, many of the observations confirmed the statements on status and distribution given in Britton (1980). It seems desirable, however, to place on record some of this information from forests where any change to the forest may have a radical effect on some birds. For example, a break in the continuum from lowland to montane forest at Bwindi, mentioned by Bennun (1986) could have a significant effect on bird distribution. Similarly, recent fragmentation of the forest at Bwamba appears to be responsible for the appearance of forest-edge species there (Buckley *et al.* 1989).

In general, over the previous 20 or so years this area of Uganda has been neglected ornithologically, so that it is useful to have an interim account of the situation, which may change again, to follow the well documented accounts in Britton (1980) based on former surveys. Some extensions of known distribution were also found for several species in our survey, and many of the species discussed are only poorly known in East Africa.

The four sites visited were the Bwindi (Impenetrable) Forest (1°00S, 29°40E), 12–20 February; Kibale Forest Reserve (0°30N, 30°25E), 21–26 February; Bwamba (0°52N, 30°05E), 26 February to 5 March; and Budongo (1°45N, 31°35E), 6–9 March.

The following observers, with their initials as used in the following species list, participated in various stages of the survey: Dr J.S. Ash (JSA) 12 February to 11 March; Dr T. Butynski (TB) 12–16 February; M.A.C. Coverdale (MACC) 12 February to 11 March; R.J. Dowsett (RJD) and Dr F. Dowsett-Lemaire (FD-L) 26 February to 5 March; Dr R. Drewes (RD) 12–15 February; T.M. Gullick (TMG) 12 February to 11 March; Dr A.D. Johns (ADJ) 21 February to 5 March; Dr J. Kalina (JK) 12–16 February; and J.E. Miskell (JEM) 12–15 February.

As an indication of species diversity, 125 species were recorded in the Impenetrable Forest in seven days, 113 at Kibale in four days, 176 at Bwamba in seven days, and 181 at Budongo in three days. The lower figures in the Impenetrable Forest and at Kibale are probably due to observation being largely confined to forested areas, whereas at Bwamba and Budongo, the habitat was more fragmented with a consequent higher proportion of non-forest species. Seventy-five birds of 48 species were netted in the Impenetrable Forest in 4.5 d, and 123 of 32 species were netted at Bwamba in 4.5 d; a total of 278 of 55 species in 9 d. Netting effort could not be measured owing to the variable number of nets in use, and the periodic cessation of their use during frequent rain showers.

Species list

Cassin's Hawk Eagle *Hieraaetus africanus*. An adult perched in Budongo on 7 March, subsequently circled noisily overhead calling *coo-coo-coo-coo-wheet*. It is recorded from Kalinzu and Impenetrable Forests in Britton (1980) and from Kibale (Skorupa 1983). (JSA, MACC, TMG.)

Nkulengu Rail *Himantornis haematopus*. Pairs with characteristic long-repeated duetting *nkulengu* calls at 20:00–21:00 at three sites in forest swamps in Bwamba around the camp on 2 and 3 March. There were apparently three pairs unless they were able to move for considerable distances very rapidly. Our porters were very familiar with the calls and claimed that the birds were distributed in swamps throughout the forest. There is one

previous record from Uganda, at Bwamba (Britton 1980) (all observers).

Red-chested Pygmy Crake *Sarothrura rufa*. An adult netted in Mubwindi swamp in the Impenetrable Forest on 14 February (JSA, MACC, JK, *et al.*). Next day the same bird or another was taped calling frequently in the same area (all observers). On 10 March one called repeatedly at the Kajjansi fish ponds near Kampala (JSA, MACC, TMG). There are three previous records from Uganda.

Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx olivinus*. Recorded by us only from Kibale where there were several in one area on 23 February (JSA, MACC, TMG), and on several days in February and March (RJD, FD-L). They reacted to taped play-back calls. Banded Long-tailed Cuckoos *C. montanus* were fairly common at higher altitudes in the Impenetrable Forest, and Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoos *C. mechowi* common to very common in the Impenetrable Forest, Kibale, Bwamba and Budongo. Two *C. mechowi* were netted.

Yellow-throated Green Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis*. Several seen and heard daily at Bwamba, 27 February to 5 March (all observers). Known only from Bwamba and Maramagambo (Britton 1980).

Pel's Fishing Owl *Scotopelia peli*. Nightly along the Semliki River, Bwamba, including juvenile(s), 27 February to 1 March (all observers). The only previous locality in Uganda is Kabalega Falls NP (Britton 1980).

Horus Swift *Apus horus*. Six on 16 February at 2360 m 'patrolling' past holes in a trackside bank in the Impenetrable Forest (JSA, MACC). Confirmation of breeding would be of interest, as the site is very similar to a recently discovered population in Nigeria (Ash 1990).

White-bellied Kingfisher *Alcedo leucogaster*. Three netted in *Cynometra* forest, Bwamba, 2–4 March (JSA, RJD, ADL, MACC). It is described as a rare and local resident in south and southwest Uganda (Britton 1980).

Chocolate-backed Kingfisher *Halcyon badia*. Common at Budongo, 7–9 March (JSA, MACC, TMG). An uncommon local resident in west Ugandan forests (Britton 1980).

Dwarf Kingfisher *Ispidina lecontei*. Unrecorded at Bwamba 27 February to 5 March, but common (6–8 daily) away from forest streams, Budongo, 7–9 March (cf. Britton 1980) (JSA, MACC, TMG).

Black Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus hartlaubi*. Only seen twice at Bwamba, its only known East African locality where it is apparently a scarce resident (Britton 1980), 27 February and 5 March (FD-L, TMG), whereas the Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *T. camurus* was common (all observers).

White-crested Hornbill *Tropicranus albocristatus*. One on 1 March (FD-L, TMG) in Bwamba, a species known only from Bwamba in East Africa but for which there are no recent records (Britton 1980).

African Green Broadbill *Pseudocalyptomena graueri*. Two together near Mubwindi swamp, Impenetrable Forest, 15 February (MACC, TMG), in one of the areas where it had been seen not infrequently by TB. Described as an apparently rare resident by Britton (1980).

Capuchin Babbler *Phyllanthus atripennis*. Fairly common, Bwamba, 27 February to 5 March (most observers). Britton (1980) describes it as reasonably common here, the only Ugandan locality except for one record in the Impenetrable Forest.

Icterine Greenbul *Phyllastrephus icterinus*.

Xavier's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus xavieri*. *P. xavieri* was the commonest greenbul at Bwamba, 27 February to 5 March (all observers). A single *P. icterinus* was netted there too. Both species are recorded from Bwamba, as well as in other west Ugandan forests (Britton 1980), and our records confirm that *P. xavieri* is common in Bwamba.

White-bellied Robin Chat *Cossypha roberti*. Only found in the Impenetrable Forest, at 1630 m (JSA, MACC), from where it is recorded as locally common at 1600 m (Britton 1980).

Archer's Ground Robin *Dryocichloides archeri*. Apparently not uncommon in the Impenetrable Forest above 2000 m (all observers). The species is recorded as common in the Rwenzoris, but only noted as 'occurring' in the Impenetrable Forest (Britton 1980).

[Prigogine's Ground Thrush *Zoothera (Turdus) kibalensis*. Fruitless searches were made in many areas of Kibale, 21–26 February, aimed at locating this bird. Tapes of *Z. (T.) tanganyicae* song were also used as a possible aid. This species is only known from two specimens collected in 1966 (Britton 1980).]

Kivu Ground Thrush *Zoothera (Turdus) tanganyicae*. At least three singing birds located in the Buhoma area of the Impenetrable Forest at 1630 m on 18–19 February (JSA, MACC, TMG), where it had been found earlier by JK. This is a rare and little known bird of the ground stratum at 2900 m on Mt Muhavura and at 1500 m in the Impenetrable Forest (Britton 1980).

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*. One in rank grass at Budongo on 9 March (JS, MACC). From information in Britton (1980), this bird was apparently still in winter quarters.

Black-capped Apalis *Apalis nigriceps*. Only recorded from Budongo, where it was fairly common, 7–9 March (JSA, MACC, TMG). Also recorded as fairly common here by Britton (1980), but there are few other records from other forests in south and west Uganda.

White-winged Warbler *Bradypterus carpalis*. Apparently common in papyrus on the edge of Kibale Forest Reserve, 25 February (JSA, MACC, RJD, FD-L, ADJ), and in March in a swamp within the northern sector of the Reserve (RJD, FD-L), where not previously recorded. This is an additional locality to those listed in Britton (1980).

Grauer's Rush Warbler *Bradypterus graueri*. Common and netted at 2100 m in the Mubwindi swamp, Impenetrable Forest, 13–15 February. This is one of the two localities in Uganda listed by Britton (1980), in each of which this *Red Data Book* species is common.

Brown-crowned Eremomela *Eremomela badiceps*. Only found in Budongo, where it was common, 7–9 March. It is regarded as being uncommon in Budongo, Bugoma, and Bwamba in west Uganda by Britton (1980).

Green-backed Eremomela *Eremomela pusilla*. Extends south to at least 0°50N, 30°15E (southwest of Ntoroko) (JSA, RJD, FD-L), an area south of that indicated by Britton (1980).

Grey Longbill *Macrosphenus concolor*.

Yellow Longbill *Macrosphenus flavicans*. The former was seen twice in Budongo, 7–9 March (JSA, MACC, TMG); the latter was common in Bwamba, but uncommon in Budongo (all observers). These records conform with those given by Britton (1980).

Uganda Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus budongoensis*. At two sites in Budongo, 7–9 March (JSA, MACC, TMG). Sparsely distributed in Budongo, Mpanga, Kifu, and Mt Elgon in Uganda (Britton 1980).

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*. One at Budongo on 7 March (JSA). A scarce Palaearctic migrant overwintering in south and west Uganda (Britton 1980).

Half-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula (albicollis) semitorquata*. A male at Budongo, 9 March (JSA, MACC). Britton (1980) refers to two birds from Budongo and Butiaba in west Uganda on 22 February and 15 March, but whether overwintering or on passage is uncertain.

Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria ocreata*. Only in Budongo, where several 7–9 March (JSA, MACC, TMG). Britton (1980) includes Budongo with three other localities in west Uganda.

(Dusky) Flycatcher *Muscicapa (adusta)*. *M. adusta* is common in the Impenetrable Forest, and those examined had uniform darkish lower mandibles, except for one pair on 16 February. One of these, sitting on a nest built into some suspended lichen at c. 4.5 m above a track, had a dark, possibly black, upper mandible, and a yellowish lower mandible with only the apical quarter black (JSA, TMG).

Cassin's Grey Flycatcher *Muscicapa cassini*. Pairs at Kibale on 23 and 25 February, and along the Semliki River at Bwamba, 27 February to 2 March (most observers). Only recently found at Bwamba in 1987 (Buckley *et al.* 1989).

Grey-throated Flycatcher *Muscicapa griseigularis*. Only noted in Kibale, where it was not uncommon, and Bwamba uncommonly (JSA, RJD, FD-L, TMG). Distribution and status appears to conform with Britton (1980).

Shrike Flycatcher *Megabyas flammulata*. Fairly common at Bwamba and Budongo, and common at Kibale, where 10–12 together on 23 February (JSA, MACC, TMG), and in March (RJD, FD-L). Apparently more numerous than indicated by Britton (1980).

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*. One at Budongo on 7 March, suggests that this is an overwintering area (JSA, MACC).

Pink-footed Puffback *Dryoscopus angolensis*. A pair in the Impenetrable Forest on 19 February was the only record (MACC, TMG). An uncommon bird locally distributed in southwest Uganda (Britton 1980).

Northern Puffback *Dryoscopus gambensis*. One at Budongo on 7 March was the first for this area (JSA).

Papyrus Gonolek *Laniarius mufumbiri*. Common in papyrus swamp in the northern sector of Kibale Forest Reserve in February (JSA), and March (RJD, FD-L), and in another swamp just outside the Reserve in February (JSA, MACC, RJD, FD-L, TMG, ADJ). This is an addition to the Kibale list of Skorupa (1983).

Lagden's Bush Shrike *Malaconotus lagdeni*. Judging by calls, somewhat resembling Grey-headed Bush Shrike *M. blanchoti*, heard fairly often down to 2100 m, this species may be commoner than is supposed in the Impenetrable Forest (JSA, JEM). Britton (1980) refers to it as a scarce bird in the Impenetrable Forest and Rwenzoris. Bennun (1985) saw four there in September 1984, one of which was of unusual colouration.

Sharpe's Starling *Cinnyricinclus sharpii*. Several in the Impenetrable Forest on 13–14

February and one netted (all observers). This bird is confined to this forest and the Rwenzoris in southwest Uganda (Britton 1980).

Chestnut-winged Starling *Onychognathus fulgidus*. A party at Kibale on 23 February (JSA, MACC, TMG, ADJ). This rather uncommon resident of south and west Uganda is also known from several other forests (Britton 1980).

Narrow-tailed Starling *Poeoptera lugubris*. Two at Budongo on 6 March (JSA, MACC) is a new locality (*vide* Britton 1980).

Tiny Sunbird *Nectarinia minulla*. An adult male at Kibale on 23 February (JSA, MACC). This species is scarce as far east as Kibale (Britton 1980).

Black Bishop *Euplectes gierowii*. Two to three on three days in Bwamba and along the road above on 26–27 February and 3 March (JSA, MACC, RJD, FD-L). A scarce resident not previously recorded from Bwamba (Britton 1980).

Orange Weaver *Ploceus aurantius*. Fairly common in secondary riverine woodland along the Semliki River, Bwamba, 27 February to 2 March (JSA, MACC, TMG, ADJ) are presumably referable to nominate *aurantius* of West Africa—not previously reported from Uganda (*vide* Britton 1980).

Weyns' Weaver *Ploceus weynsi*. Common at one site at Budongo on 9 March, a nest collected from several seen may be of this species (JSA, MACC, TMG). The nesting site of this species has not been found, but the birds have been recorded previously from Budongo (Britton 1980).

Shelley's Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza shelleyi*. One netted on 15 February at 2100 m in the Impenetrable Forest (all observers). An uncommon resident known elsewhere in Uganda from the Rwenzoris (Britton 1980).

Grey-headed Olive-back *Nesocharis capistrata*. Three at Budongo on 7 March (JSA), was the only record. Only known in northwest Uganda where also recorded from several other localities (Britton 1980).

Grant's Bluebill *Spermophaga poliogenys*. Fairly common in *Cynometra* forest, Bwamba, 2–4 March (all observers). This is the only locality in Uganda for this uncommon resident (Britton 1980).

Red-fronted Antpecker *Parmoptila woodhousei*. Single birds at 1630 m in the Impenetrable Forest on 19 February, and at Kibale on 25 February (TMG). This uncommon resident in Uganda is also known from Budongo, Bwamba, and Kalinzu Forests (Britton 1980).

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Erratum

In the paper by Dr Colin Ryall "Notes on nest construction by the Indian House Crow *Corvus splendens* and other aspects of its breeding biology in Mombasa, Kenya" (*Scopus* 14: 14–16) there was an omission on p. 14, penultimate paragraph, the first sentence of which should read "The first nest collection of 18 November 1985 at Makadara Park, a small paved park in the Mombasa town centre, and the second on 1 November 1985 at Mzimle, a large area..."

Erratum

In Dr L. A. Bennun's paper "An avifaunal survey of the Trans-Mara Forest, Kenya" (*Scopus* 14: 61–72) there was a mistake on p. 66. No. 757 Black-collared *Apalis Apalis melanocephala*, should read "758 Black-collared *Apalis Apalis pulchra*."

Notice

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